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SUBJECT: ISRAEL INCSR 2009 PART I

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Summary
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¶1. (U) Israel is not a significant producer of or trafficking point for illicit narcotics. However, domestic demand fuels a diverse local drug market that relies on smuggling from both neighboring and more distant countries. Imported marijuana, hashish, ecstasy, heroin, cocaine, and LSD are all prevalent, as are a growing number of domestically produced "designer" drugs and higher-quality hydroponic marijuana. Israeli officials noted with concern that some of these "designer" drugs are being marketed and exported to the U.S., Europe, and Australasia via the internet. Israel has also become a transit country for the smuggling of heroin from Jordan to Egypt in return for money or hashish. Unlike the U.S., Israel does not have an analog drug law. This has facilitated the phenomenon of "pitzutziot," or, 24-hour convenience stores, selling "designer" drugs--only some of which are prohibited by existing ordinances. Oftentimes, these stores also sell illicit narcotics, large quantities of common household products used as inhalants, such as glue, and alcohol-especially near popular clubs and bars. Israel is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention.

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Status of Country
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¶2. (U) Over the past year, Israeli authorities noticed that many segments of the population moved away from abusing traditional illicit narcotics. Instead, the use of "designer" drugs--many of which are manufactured to fall within the bounds of technically "legal highs" due to their chemical composition--and counterfeit pharmaceutical prescriptions became more common. Officials seized several large quantities of active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) diverted for use in the manufacture of illicit narcotics and "designer" drugs over the past year. These included Paracetamol (used to dilute heroin), Mannitol (a sugar used as an adulterant or cutting agent in various illicit narcotics), pseudoephedrine, Cathinone, amphetamines, as well as large quantities of empty pill capsules found in make-shift drug laboratories. Israel has no law requiring pharmaceutical machinery to be registered, which facilitates their use in the manufacture of illicit narcotics.

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Country Actions against Drugs in 2009
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¶3. (U) Policy Initiatives: Since Israel is not a major producing or manufacturing country, most efforts were targeted to counter illicit drug trafficking, supply and the small-scale manufacture and use of new "designer" drugs. The Israeli National Police (INP) continued its general policy of interdiction at Israel's borders and ports of entry.

¶4. (U) Israel focused legislative measures to promote the rapid inclusion of new substances into its Dangerous Drugs Ordinance. Over the past year, almost 50 new substances were added. This

year's additions set a new precedent since some of the substances have not yet been detected in Israel, nor determined in practice to be dangerous. Instead these substances were assumed to be dangerous due to their chemical composition. A recent amendment to this Ordinance forbids the manufacturing, importing, exporting, displaying, possessing or selling, without permission, of any drug-related paraphernalia.

¶15. (U) Israel also recognized the danger inherent in the diversion of precursors and substances used in the manufacture of illicit narcotics. To prevent and control the diversion of precursors, a competent national authority was appointed, national legislation requiring permits for import and export of precursors is now being enforced, and good cooperation exists with the industrial sector to prevent diversion.

¶16. (U) Law Enforcement Efforts: The police concentrated their efforts on interdicting smuggling from both neighboring and overseas countries. Marijuana and hashish remain the most common drugs smuggled into Israel. With the entrance of Moroccan and Afghan hashish into the Israeli market, the Egyptian border has become the main hashish source in the country. The 230-KM peaceful border with Egypt makes it an attractive entry for smuggling. In the first three-quarters of 2009, INP seized 930kg of hashish and 186 kg of marijuana by the Egyptian border.

¶17. (U) In the past year, Israeli law enforcement officials opened 31,419 total drug offence files—a 7.1% increase from the previous year. Around three-quarters of these cases (23,259) were for drug use (a 9.5% increase on the previous year). There were 4,532 trafficking cases—a 38.3% increase, demonstrating the Israeli National Police's focus on trafficking offenses. Cultivation and production cases (206) fell by 38.5%. There was no significant change in possession cases (5,849).

¶18. (U) Law enforcement officials engaged in a special initiative to combat the sale of "designer drugs" sold in 24-hour convenience stores, or "pitzutziot." Israeli police and customs officials conducted over 30 raids on such kiosks this year, each yielding between 10–5,000 capsules. The Pharmaceutical Crimes Unit, in coordination with the police, executed three major raids on capsule producers and suppliers, seizing over one million empty capsules. However, the lack of an analog drug law or law requiring the registration of pharmaceutical processing machinery continues to cause complications. Customs, Police and Pharmaceutical Crimes Unit (PCU) officials worked together to intercept and investigate shipments of active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) diverted for use in the production of illicit narcotics.

¶19. (U) Police and customs officials increased efforts to combat the importation of "Yaba" (a combination of methamphetamine and caffeine) from Thailand and Laos, as well as its use among the local Thai population. They conducted over 40 seizures in the second half of 2009.

¶10. (U) Operation North Star, a joint effort among local and national police authorities and international partners, broke up a cocaine smuggling ring operating from Panama to Israel and Europe. In all, over 100 kgs of cocaine were seized during this operation.

¶11. (U) Police also broke up a major ring of narcotic addicts and psychiatrists in the major cities that was stealing and forging Ritalin prescriptions, recording over 100 incidents of counterfeit Ritalin prescriptions. Efforts are also underway to interdict the smuggling of anabolic steroids, another chief concern.

Drug Seizures*

Cocaine (kg)

2009–57
2008–135
2007–36
2006–42
2005–169

Heroin (kg)

2009–253
2008–303

2007-136
2006-70.3
2005-140

Marijuana (kg)
2009-544
2008-852
2007-1,920
2006-5,032
2005-10,000

Hashish (kg)
2009-1,378
2008-1,325
2007-1,009
2006-898
2005-1,022

MDMA (Ecstasy tablets)
2009-6, 625
2008-112,905+2 kg powder
2007**-939,741
2006-112,985
2005-266,996

Amphetamines
2009-3,682 tablets
2008***-88,937 tablets
2007-6,114 tablets
2006****-8.7(kg)
2005****-7.2(kg)

Source of data: Israel National Police, Research Department.

*2009 data represents seizures from January through September.

** Of the 939,741 Ecstasy tablets seized in 2007, 777,000 were seized from one container in the port of Haifa arriving from Europe.

***80,000 of this number were tablets of Captagon seized in the Dead Sea region.

****Seizures of Cathinone only. Availability of Cathinone diminished after it was banned under Israeli law, but authorities continue to pursue analogs of the drugs.

¶12. (U) Corruption: As a matter of government policy, Israel does not encourage or facilitate the illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, or the laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. Corruption is treated as a serious matter by the government. In 2009, a number of public officials, including a former prime minister, were under investigation for corruption-related offenses. Israel has signed, but not ratified, the UN Convention against Corruption. Israel does not have specific legislation for public corruption related to narcotics, but narcotics-related corruption is covered under its generic anticorruption legislation.

¶13. (U) Agreements and Treaties: Israel is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances, and the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs as amended by the 1972 Protocol. Israel and the U.S. have a customs mutual assistance agreement and a mutual legal assistance treaty. Israel ratified the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in December 2006 and has been a member of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) since 2003. Israel has signed but not yet ratified the UN Convention against Corruption. Israeli companies participate in UN operations Topaz and Purple to restrict the abuse of precursor chemical substances. Israel is one of 36 parties to the COE European Treaty on Extradition and has separate extradition treaties with several other countries, including the U.S. Under the umbrella of the UNODC, Israel has restarted bilateral cooperation with the Palestinian Authority on reducing demand and supply of narcotics. Israel also cooperates on a regular basis with the Anti-Narcotics Department in Jordan. This has resulted in increasingly effective control of the Israel-Jordan border area, as reflected in interdiction figures.

¶14. (U) In 2007, a new Protocol to the Convention on Extradition between the United States and Israel entered into force.

Significantly updating the 1962 convention, the Protocol replaces the outdated list of extraditable offenses with a modern dual criminality approach and permits temporary surrender for trial in the requesting state of fugitives serving a prison sentence in the requested state. In combination with Israeli domestic extradition law, the Protocol also provides for service of a U.S. sentence in Israel for fugitives determined to be Israeli citizens and residents at the time of the commission of the offenses and allows limited inclusion of hearsay evidence in U.S. extradition documents. Israeli domestic statute of limitations in certain circumstances, however, may prohibit extradition of fugitives whose cases are more than ten years old.

¶15. (U) This year, Israel was accepted as a member of the Permanent Forum on International Pharmaceutical Crime (PFIPC), which consists of 15 member countries from around the world, including the United States. In 2010, Israel will host the annual PFIPC Conference.

¶16. (U) Cultivation/Production: The majority of illicit narcotics consumed in Israel are produced elsewhere. A small amount of high-quality hydroponic marijuana ("hydro") is grown domestically.

¶17. (U) Drug Flow/Transit: The Israeli National Police (INP) believes that Israel has become a transit country for the smuggling of heroin from Jordan to Egypt in return for money or hashish. Robust routes used to smuggle weaponry, people and tobacco are also utilized for drug smuggling. Much of the smuggling is carried out by Israeli Bedouin drug smugglers who have connections with Egyptian cultivators. In 2009, the INP seized over 150 kg and 36.5 kg of heroin by the Jordanian and Egyptian borders, respectively.

¶18. (U) The importation of precursor chemicals and production of "designer" drugs is becoming increasingly prevalent in Israel. The Pharmaceutical Crime Unit (PCU) reports that some of these drugs have been marketed and exported to the U.S., Europe, and Australasia via the internet. Israeli officials have noted the proliferation of an entire network whereby precursor chemicals are smuggled into or diverted once in Israel, immediately used to produce various "designer" drugs, which are in turn shipped for sale in kiosks domestically and small quantities for export. Law enforcement intelligence shows that these domestic drug manufacturing and distribution networks are functioning extremely effectively so as to not keep large quantities of any finished product in any one place.

¶19. (U) Domestic Programs/Demand Reduction: The Israel Anti-Drug Authority (IADA) is the primary agency responsible for designing and implementing domestic programs to reduce the demand for drugs. National efforts to counter the abuse of illicit drugs focus on cultural and gender sensitive policies aimed to prevent drug use among the general, target and high-risk populations. Treatment and rehabilitation of drug abuse victims and their families is a key goal. Israel offers myriad treatment methods, ranging from drug detoxification, therapeutic communities, drug substitution and needle exchange programs, with the overall aim to provide unique solutions for different individuals and minimize the adverse consequences of drug abuse on society. Credible and accurate information on the harmful consequences of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) is provided to the public as part of general national public awareness campaigns. The IADA stresses the importance of community-wide participatory approach to countering drug abuse, and has developed regional and local programs addressing the unique needs of each community. An amendment to Israel's Municipality Law has made it compulsory for local municipalities to establish treatment services for drug abuse victims, and to offer education and prevention activities in their jurisdiction, as well as establish local committees for combating drugs. In the last year, IADA has worked intensively on the issue of alcohol, especially as it relates to drug abuse.

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U.S. Policy Initiatives and Programs
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¶20. (U) Bilateral Cooperation: There is robust collaboration between Israel and the United States on illicit narcotics. The DEA Country Office in Nicosia, Cyprus and Israeli officials characterize their cooperation as outstanding. The Israeli Tax Authority also maintains direct cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement offices in Rome, and continues to conduct joint anti-smuggling operations. There is a monthly bilateral exchange on major drug seizures in both countries. The Pharmaceutical Crime Unit also works directly with

the DEA.

¶21. (U) Road Ahead: Officials from both the Israeli and U.S. government wish to continue strengthening an already excellent partnership in the area of illicit drug enforcement and rehabilitation efforts. The DEA Country Office in Nicosia, Cyprus will continue its cooperation and coordination with counterparts in the Israeli law enforcement community. The Israeli National Police continues to strengthen relationships with law enforcement agencies in other countries, and works through the Office of International Relations within the IADA to pursue this objective. The IADA has begun to establish relationships with the National Institute on Drug Abuse and the Office of National Drug Control Policy in the U.S. The Pharmaceutical Crimes Unit hopes to engage with U.S. governmental and private researchers on the effects of several "designer" drugs made with Cathinone and amphetamine derivatives as it prepares for an Israeli analog drug law. The Israeli Tax Authority would like to bolster collaboration with the U.S. on investigations of narcotics smuggling.

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